Nova Scotia's Early Childhood Development Initiative

Annual Report April 2003

Our Children... Today's Investment, Tomorrow's Prosperity

The Beginnings of All Things are Small.

- Cicero -

Letter from the Minister

It is my pleasure to present the first annual report on Nova Scotia's Early Childhood Development Initiative.

In September 2000, federal, provincial and territorial governments affirmed the significance of the early years by signing a five-year investment plan to enhance early childhood development programs and services.

As part of our commitment to support families and improve opportunities for children to have a healthy start in life, Nova Scotia launched its Early Childhood Development Initiative. *Our Children... Today's Investment, Tomorrow's Promise* is the vision upon which we have begun to build a system of early childhood development that will lay the foundation for life-long health and well-being.

This annual report provides an overview of the new and expanded early childhood development programs and services initiated to date for the fiscal year ending March 2003.

We have made great strides towards establishing an innovative early childhood development program in Nova Scotia that will enable families to reap the benefits for years to come. Some of the investments that have already been made in our children include:

- Almost $7.1 million to date has been provided to recruit and retain qualified staff for licensed child-care centres

- $1.3 million in grants will help early childhood training institutions create new professional-development opportunities

- 329 new full-day spaces and 74 part-day spaces have been created through new start-up centres and expansion grants for existing child-care centres

- 100 new subsidized, portable child-care spaces have been added to benefit the province's low- and moderate-income families

- $450,000 has been provided to create child-care resource and referral centres that give parents new resources to access local caregivers

- More than $1 million has been directed to programs and training initiatives that enhance opportunities for children with special needs to access licensed childcare

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- More than $550,000 will help children who have language challenges with the introduction of an early language and learning program in Nova Scotia's communities

These accomplishments are the product of the commitment and collaboration of parents, early childhood development professionals from a variety of sectors, agencies and organizations delivering services, the community at large, and all levels of government.

Sincerely,

Hon. David M. Morse

Minister of Community Services

Table of **Contents**

Section 1 **Background**

Introduction 4

ECD Agreement. 4

Significance of the Early Years 5

Existing Early Childhood Services in Nova Scotia 6

Section 2 **Vision**

Our Children... Today's Investment, Tomorrow's Promise

Vision 7

Guiding Principles 7

Building the Early Childhood Development System 8

Planning Mechanisms 10

Section 3 **From Vision to Implementation**

Healthy Beginnings–Enhanced Home Visiting Initiative . . 14

Stabilizing and Enhancing Childcare 17

Parenting and Family Supports 21

Community Engagement and Infrastructure Support. . . . 25

Summary of Grant Investments 27

The Path Ahead. 28

Glossary of Terms 29

References. 30

Endnotes 31

Appendices 32

Section 1 **Background**

Introduction

The Government of Nova Scotia is pleased to present its first annual progress report on the Early Childhood Development Initiative. This report fulfills Nova Scotia's commitment to report publicly on early childhood development (ECD) programs and services developed under the September 2000 First Ministers Communiqué on Early Childhood Development.

This annual report is divided into three sections:

Section 1 provides background information on the Early Childhood Development Initiative, the significance of the early years and an overview of existing early childhood services in the province.

Section 2 describes Nova Scotia's vision for a comprehensive system of early childhood development in the province, which considers both the federal and provincial priorities for action.

Section 3 provides a progress report related to the identified priorities and a summary of initial investments.

ECD Agreement

In the ECD Communiqué, the governments in Canada (federal, provincial, and territorial) recognized the importance of early childhood development in human development, stating:

First Ministers affirm their commitment to the well-being of children by setting out their vision of early childhood development as an investment in the future of Canada. Canada's future, social vitality and economic prosperity depend on the opportunities that are provided to children today.

In support of the agreement, the Government of Canada is transferring $2.2 billion to provincial and territorial governments for investment in early childhood development programs and services for children from birth to six years of age. Funding began on April 1, 2001, with the planned allocation to Nova Scotia of $66 million over the course of the five-year period. The four key areas identified for funding action are:

- Promote healthy pregnancy, birth, and infancy
- Improve parenting and family supports
- Strengthen early childhood development, learning, and care
- Strengthen community supports

Significance of the Early Years

There was a time when it was believed that development of the human brain was primarily completed at birth. Recent neuro-scientific research has changed this view.

What happens during the first months and years of life matters a lot, not because this period of development provides an indelible blueprint for adult well-being, but because it sets either a sturdy or fragile stage for what follows.[1]

Research on the early years indicates:

- Early brain development is interactive, rapid, and dramatic.
- During critical periods, particular parts of the brain need positive stimulation to develop functions properly.
- Negative experiences in the early years have long-lasting effects that can be difficult to overcome later.
- Good nutrition and nurturing support optimal early neurological and physical development and later learning and behaviour.
- There are experiences and activities that can improve or harm early child development.[2]

The presence and opportunity for appropriate experiences in the early years in the home, the care environment, and the neighbourhood can promote optimum development in all areas – learning, language, social, emotional, behavioural, and physical – for our children that will last a lifetime.

The following factors together determine a child's healthy development:

Individual
- Good prenatal care
- Healthy birth weight
- Healthy lifestyle choices including nutrition and exercise

Family
- Income
- Education
- Parenting style
- Nurturing and stimulating environment

Neighbourhood
- Safety/cohesion
- Mix of income levels within neighbourhoods

Society
- Access to quality child-care arrangements
- Quality health care/ developmental services
- Access to information about such things as caregiver – child bonding[3]

Existing Early Childhood Development Services in Nova Scotia

While it is important to recognize the commitment of professionals currently providing early childhood development services, it is equally important to recognize the need for new and expanded services and the coordination of those services. In Nova Scotia, we have a range of programs that support early childhood development including public health services, early intervention, childcare and family-resource programs. These services have been developed independently of each other and financed through various funding streams and levels of government.

Since this project began, we have improved the delivery of our programs, and we recognize that there is still more work to be done. Many parents across the province are looking for more access to a range of child-care options, parenting supports and early childhood development information to help them raise healthy, happy, and confident children.

Our challenge is to move from this array of programs and services to create a system of early childhood development in Nova Scotia. It is important that we consider the linkages between care, education, and parent support. A true system is built from a common vision and set of strategies that are complementary, mutually reinforcing, and reasonably comprehensive. Also vital in the early stages of creating a system is the need to engage early childhood stakeholders, parents, and communities in establishing formal linkages between programs. In the end, building a system will be the result of the efforts of individuals and parents, early childhood development and health professionals, agencies and organizations, communities at large, and government at all levels.

Section 2 **Vision**

Our Children...Today's Investment, Tomorrow's Promise

Nova Scotia's first step was to develop a vision, guiding principles, and values as well as priorities for initial investment. These were outlined in the document, *Our Children... Today's Investment, Tomorrow's Promise,* released in 2001. This vision is the foundation for establishing a system of early childhood development in the province. The vision was established from best-practice research in early childhood development, through consultations with Nova Scotians (including the Round Table on Child Care), and provincial findings from the National Children's Agenda consultations held in 1999.

Vision

The vision for the children of Nova Scotia is that they be valued and encouraged to develop their unique physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and creative potential.

Guiding Principles

Together we can create a system which reflects the following principles:

- Comprehensive
- Integrated
- Accessible
- Inclusive
- High quality
- Accountable
- Community-based
- Respectful of diversity and regional variation

Respecting the research and identified areas for investment, Nova Scotia's initial ECD Systems Investment include the following four program components:

- Enhanced Home Visiting
- Stabilization and Enhancement of Childcare
- Enhanced Parenting and Family Support
- Enhanced Community Engagement and Infrastructure Support

The comprehensive system of Early Childhood Development (ECD) envisioned for Nova Scotia brings together a range of services delivered to children in the early years. Integrated service-delivery models at the community level will encompass quality childcare and enhanced home visiting along with parent education and support, training of child-care providers, and other community-based services. This will establish a continuum that begins with prenatal services and continues through to the successful transition of our children into the school system with collaboration from the departments of Health, Community Services, and Education, as well as other community partners. Policy and legislation may be developed in the coming years, to assist in the establishment of a comprehensive system of early childhood development. Services will be delivered through the use of both professionals and trained lay persons in the community.

Programs and services that have been announced or will be established as part of Nova Scotia's comprehensive system of Early Childhood Development include:

- Enhanced home visitation
- Enhanced quality childcare including full- and part-day programs, inclusion for children with special needs, and accessibility to flexible alternatives, including in-home childcare, seasonal care, and emergency care
- New early language and learning programs
- Enhanced family resource centres
- New child-care resource and referral services
- Enhanced early intervention services for children with special needs
- Pre- and in-service training for caregivers
- Enhanced parent education and support

Successful examples of integrated service models may operate from a hub, such as a family resource centre, and should build on existing services. What exists in one region will not necessarily be identical to another region, recognizing the difference in needs, geography and existing services. To obtain community input in planning ECD programs and services, four Regional Collaboration Teams will be established, one in each region of the province. These Regional Collaboration Teams will bring together a variety of early childhood stakeholders at the regional level to share information, identify needs, plan the coordination of services, and, as appropriate, integrate services.

Model to ensure optimal child development, as well as coordination, access, and timely response in service delivery.

Planning Mechanisms

The Early Childhood Development Initiative is a shared responsibility of the provincial government, service organizations receiving ECD funding, families and communities. Government is setting policy direction on the overall initiative as well as setting program standards and guidelines with stakeholder input. The community will deliver the services and create linkages among services at the local level. Both government and communities will be engaged in monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on the Early Childhood Development Initiative.

In ensuring the ECD Initiative proceeds in a timely, coordinated, and accountable manner, a Provincial Steering Committee has been established at the government level. At the community level, Regional Collaboration Teams are being developed.

The Provincial Steering Committee includes senior officials representing the departments of Health, Community Services and Education. The Steering Committee provides advice on provincial policy direction and monitors the implementation. We are creating a continuum of services to support a child's development from birth, through their transition to the school system, including childcare and parent support.

Regional Collaboration Teams will include early childhood development professionals from a variety of backgrounds. With the vision of creating a system, these Teams will be mandated to create both formal and informal linkages between existing ECD programs and services and new and expanded ECD programs and services. Nova Scotia will be using a community-partnership approach in the development and implementation of these programs and services.

Many forms of consultation have been used in this first year of the ECD Initiative and will continue throughout the Initiative. The Round Table on Child Care, an advisory committee to the Minister of Community Services, will expand both its mandate and membership to reflect the broader priorities of the Early Childhood Development Initiative and the system. Parents will continue to be engaged in this group and will play a vital role as members of service organization boards and committees.

In building the system, existing partnerships will be strengthened, new partnerships will be developed, and understanding and support for the significance of the early years will grow.

Section 3 **From Vision to Implementation**

This section of the Annual Report provides an overview of the progress made on Nova Scotia's ECD Initiative in the past 14 months in each area of priority:

- Enhanced Home Visiting
- Stabilizing and Enhancing Childcare
- Enhanced Parenting and Family Support
- Community Engagement and Infrastructure Support

Brief program descriptions, an update of activities, and service volumes are identified for these priorities. This section concludes with a Summary of Initial ECD Investments and comments on next steps in ECD implementation.

The following table, entitled *Early Childhood Development System*, provides an overview of the ECD Initiative underway.

Program Components and Strategies

Early Childhood Development System

Enhanced Home Visiting

Universal postpartum screening, using a standardized approach, to identify families who may potentially benefit from enhanced home visiting

An in-depth, in-home family assessment will be offered to all families identified through the screening process

Enhanced home-visiting service will be offered to families identified through the assessment process as potentially benefiting from enhanced home visiting

All families will be contacted by public health services during the postpartum period and offered telephone contact or home visits as required for identified short-term needs

Families will be linked to health and community resources as needed

Stabilizing & Enhancing Childcare

Early Childhood Education Training Initiative

Child Care Stabilization Grant

New and expanded non-profit, licensed Child-care centres

Child Care Subsidized Space Enhancement

Special Needs components:
- Building Blocks
- Partnerships for Inclusion
- Differential/supported Child-care funding

Informal childcare through Income Assistance & Employment Support

Early Childhood Development Centres

Enhanced Parenting and Family Support

Provincial Parent Education Framework

Early Language and Learning Program

Enhanced Domestic Adoption

Child-care Resource and Referral Service

Community Support & Infrastructure

Regional ECD collaboration committees and various ECD implementation committees at provincial, regional, and community levels

ECD Information Systems

Reporting provincially and federally on ECD

Healthy Beginnings–
Enhanced Home Visiting Initiative

There is growing evidence of the importance of the early years. Experiences during these early days, months, and years lay the foundation for lifelong health and well being.

Public health services, through enhancements to current prenatal and perinatal programs and services, will support families during pregnancy, the early days and months after birth, and for the child's first three years of life.

Many circumstances such as age, geographic isolation, limited education, limited family or community support, and low income may place an additional burden on families. This has been shown to have an impact on parents' confidence, parenting skills and ability to support their child's optimal health and development.

Strengthening Supports for Young Families in our Community

Public health services, in all Nova Scotia health districts, will offer universal screening to families very early after birth. The majority of screening will take place in-hospital to identify families who may benefit from additional home-visiting support.

Families identified through the screening process will be offered a standardized, in-home, family-centred assessment focusing on parent-child attachment, challenges facing the family (as identified by the family), current use of community resources, and personal and professional support. The family assessment will help public health staff identify supportive interventions, such as enhanced home-visiting.

Enhanced home-visiting will focus on supporting parents, promoting a healthy parent-child relationship, fostering healthy childhood development and linking families with community resources that further enhance opportunities for the healthy growth and development of the baby and family as a whole.

Enhanced Home Visiting Objectives

- To promote the optimal level of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development of all children in Nova Scotia.
- To enhance the capacity of parents to support healthy child development.
- To enhance the capacity of communities to support healthy child development.
- To contribute to a coordinated, effective system of child-development services and supports for children and their families.

Enhancing Quality of Service

In response to growing evidence of the immediate and long-term benefits of secure parent-child attachment, the Healthy Beginnings Provincial Steering Committee and public-health staff and management have identified assessment and intervention based on parent-child attachment as a key staff competency.

All public health services staff participating in Healthy Beginnings have received in-depth professional development to support this work through the NCAST Program (Nursing Child Assessment Satellite Training, University of Washington). One of the training components of NCAST is the assessment of parent-child attachment. Staff must demonstrate competency to conduct this component of the assessment.

Building Community Capacity to Support Healthy Child Development

A community home-visitor component will be introduced in Fall 2003 to support home-visiting for families participating in the enhanced home-visiting initiative. The community home-visitor will receive training to work with families and to support healthy child development.

An extensive provincial program scan has begun to help develop the community home-visitor component of Healthy Beginnings. This information will help determine the best way to integrate the Healthy Beginnings home-visitor component with existing community programs.

There is evidence that the parent-child relationship has a critical impact on all aspects of a child's life.

To recognize unique community characteristics, strengths, and challenges, public health services throughout Nova Scotia will establish and lead local implementation teams to support the implementation and evaluation of Healthy Beginnings. Healthy Beginnings Implementation Teams will be represented on the ECD Regional Collaboration Teams.

Local partners such as family resource centres, maternity services, Child Protection and Prevention Services (Department of Community Services), consumer representatives, mental-health services, addiction services, child-care centres, and other community partners, will be invited to participate in this process.

Public health services works in partnership with communities, families, and individuals.

Program Components – Status Summary March 31, 2003

Enhanced Home Visiting Initiative – Healthy Beginnings	
Professional Development	Professional development supporting public health services staff to be completed for current staff by Spring 2003.
Recruitment	Recruitment of additional public health staff necessary to support the implementation of Healthy Beginnings has begun and District Health Authorities will continue to identify and recruit the complement of staff required over the next few years (phased-in funding).
Tools & Guidelines Development/Selection	Screening and family-assessment tools and supporting guidelines are complete and ready to be implemented following training in May 2003.
Environmental Scan of Home Visiting in Nova Scotia	Healthy Beginnings Provincial Steering Committee to make recommendations regarding community home-visiting component after a review of the provincial community home-visiting program scan, in Spring 2003. It is anticipated the community home-visitor component will be implemented in Fall 2003.
Implementation Teams	Local implementation teams to be established by Spring – Summer 2003.
Information Technology	Development of a database to support Healthy Beginnings will proceed after consultations with District Health Authorities. Anticipated date for completion is Spring 2003.
Evaluation Framework	Develop Healthy Beginnings evaluation framework by Summer – Fall 2003. This will be linked to an overall evaluation framework for ECD.
Service Coordination and Referrals	Continue to create a coordinated system of Early Childhood Development for Nova Scotia through ongoing participation on the Provincial Early Childhood Development Management Committee.

Stabilizing and Enhancing Childcare

Stabilizing and Enhancing Childcare Objectives

- To promote the healthy development of children under six years of age by supporting and developing quality early learning and child-care programs in Nova Scotia.
- To stabilize and enhance the quality of licensed childcare.
- To support parents who need childcare while they work or attend school or training programs by providing subsidies to offset the cost of licensed childcare.
- To promote that infants and young children with special needs are fully included in community-based child-care programs and that staff are trained to best meet the needs of children with varying abilities.
- To enhance and improve the quality and accessibility of a range of child-care options for families in both rural and urban areas of Nova Scotia.
- To assist both caregivers and parents with opportunities for training, access to information, and support on child-related matters.

Research indicates that the quality of childcare does have an effect on children's current and future development.[4] Quality early learning and child-care programs have been shown to promote the development of physical, language, motor, social, emotional, and cognitive skills. There is an abundance of research describing the components of quality childcare. These include factors such as adequate adult-to-child ratios, small group sizes, appropriately trained and remunerated caregivers, safe and attractive play spaces for children, and child-centred curricula. In a child-centred curriculum there is a blend of quiet and physically oriented activities, including a balance of indoor and outdoor play. There are opportunities for free play, as well as child-directed and teacher-directed experiences. Children learn and grow when they are cared for in respectful, responsive, and developmentally appropriate environments where adults relate to them as important individuals in their own right.

Quality early learning and child-care programs are a priority in Nova Scotia as:

- There are approximately 65,000 children under six years of age
- Approximately 70% (45,300) of children from birth to six years of age have mothers in the paid workforce and therefore, most children are spending the majority of their waking hours in licensed or unlicensed child-care environments.
- Approximately 20% of these children (10,700) are in licensed, full- or part-day, child-care programs with the remaining 80% in unlicensed or informal child-care arrangements.

What are we doing to support these children and families and to enhance access to quality child-care options?

We are actively working to attract and retain staff in the child-care system by providing recruitment, retention, and educational opportunities. Nova Scotia is providing a "stabilization" recruitment and retention grant to all staff in our 203 full-day, child-care facilities to help retain qualified and caring staff. This is a recognition of the importance of child-care staff in our children's lives. Nova Scotia allocated $3,400,000 in 2001/02 and $3,690,000 in 2003/04 to the child-care stabilization grant.

Research tells us that there is a direct relationship between the education levels of child-care staff (percentage of staff with degrees or diplomas in early childhood services) and the quality of services provided. As such, we have embarked on a provincial Early Childhood Development training initiative. This initiative provides increased educational opportunities for people entering the field and continuing education opportunities for staff already in the field. The training curriculum includes age-appropriate programming, special-needs programming, child-care administration, communication-skills development, working with families, parent education, and other related areas within early childhood development. The method of delivery for pre-service and in-service presentations will include distance education, teleconferencing, open learning, and other training models.

In addition to the recruitment, retention, and training of staff, Nova Scotia is improving access to quality licensed early childhood programs and services by increasing the availability of such programs. This grant has resulted in 329 new full-day, child-care spaces and 74 part-day spaces to meet the needs of working parents.

In order to promote accessibility to childcare, 100 of the existing child-care spaces have been subsidized to support lower-income parents in accessing licensed childcare and supporting their continued employment in the labour market. To support parents in receipt of income assistance who need childcare while they work, attend school or training programs, additional funds are being allocated to assist with their child-care needs.

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

To ensure the optimal development of all of Nova Scotia's children, additional supports are being provided to facilitate the inclusion of children with special needs into licensed child-care programs. As children with disabilities or delays are at greater risk for poor outcomes later in life, it is vital that interventions are made as early as possible. These interventions are best provided by trained educators who have a skillset that will support the child's developmental needs in the context of a quality child-care environment. To this end, the following three strategies have been designed:

- Partnerships for Inclusion
- Building Blocks
- Supported Child-care Funding

Partnerships for Inclusion

Partnerships for Inclusion is a project of the Early Intervention Association of Nova Scotia (EINS) in collaboration with SpeciaLink: The National Centre for Child Care Inclusion, with ECDI funds provided in the form of a grant. This initiative is based on the premise that high-quality child-care programs offer environments that are responsive to the early developmental needs of all children, including those with special needs. A facilitator employed under this project will work with a child-care centre by first evaluating their program and environment using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) to establish a baseline and then by working with the staff to improve the centre's environment and daily program. Information and support are provided through on-site consultation, workshops, and resources. This project is supported by a regional advisory committee and is currently offered in 22 licensed, full-day, child-care centres throughout the province.

Building Blocks

Building Blocks is an early childhood education training project created by the Progress Centre for Early Intervention, a non-profit program operating in the Halifax Regional Municipality funded, in part, by the Department of Community Services. This training initiative emphasizes the use of an individually responsive, developmentally appropriate program to facilitate the full inclusion of children with special needs. A complete set of training materials and a train-the-trainer workshop have been created under this grant and program delivery throughout the province will begin in Spring 2003.

Supported Child-care Funding is an existing Early Childhood Development Services program that has been enhanced under the Early Childhood Development Initiative. It ensures that all licensed child-care centres have funding available to them to increase their capacity to provide the extra programming and developmental support required in a fully inclusive program. Funds are provided to the child-care centre on behalf of a child with identified special needs. There are now approximately 250 children participating in 65 licensed, full- and part-day, child-care programs.

ECD is also providing an equipment and resource grant to 26 child-development centres for the purpose of purchasing equipment, materials, and teacher resources to further enhance delivery of quality, licensed, part-day childcare. Child-development centres are mandated to serve children from low-income families by providing them with assistance to participate in preschool programs that support their successful transition into the school system.

Program Components – Status Summary March 31, 2003

Stabilizing and Enhancing Childcare	
Stabilization Grant	Provided to all early childhood staff in 203 licensed, full-day, child-care centres to enhance staff recruitment and retention.
Training Initiative	Provided to nine institutions that offer Early Childhood Education training opportunities for students entering the field or for in-service training of staff in the field. Some programs are already being offered with continued implementation planned for Summer – Fall 2003.
New and Expanded Non-Profit Licensed Childcare	Provided 22 grants to non-profit, full- and part-day child-care centres resulting in 329 new full-day spaces and 74 new part-day spaces
Subsidy	Increasing accessibility to childcare through 100 new subsidies for licensed childcare, addressing existing waiting lists, and providing support for childcare through Income Assistance and Employment Support.
Inclusion for Special Needs	Training initiatives and funding of supported childcare through: • Partnerships for Inclusion • Building Blocks • Supported Child-care Funding
Child Development Centres	Provide 26 grants to part-day Child Development Centres for equipment and resource materials

Parenting and Family Supports

Parenting & Family Support Objectives

- To promote the development of healthy children.
- To partner with communities in recognizing and supporting parents' roles in the healthy development of children.
- To promote the early development of children's language and cognitive development by enhancing the capacities of parents and early childhood educators.
- To increase the opportunity for children to have stable home environments through enhancements to adoption services.

Parents and families have primary responsibility for the care of their children. Many parents express the need for support in their parenting role and some have limited social support networks. One of the priorities of ECD is to provide opportunities for parent education and create new support networks designed to meet the needs of both parents and caregivers in the community. Information on informal and licensed childcare is also needed at the community level, particularly in rural communities where licensed care may not be available. ECD is connecting families with these supports through a variety of approaches.

Parent Education

Parent Education/Family Support refers to any programs designed to increase the health, well-being and safety of children by supporting parents and promoting positive parenting.

In Nova Scotia, we have focused on creating parent-education programs that reduce the risk factors for child abuse and promote the healthy development of children. Family resource centres create warm, friendly environments for parents and therefore have been key partners in delivering parent education. They were introduced in 1993 through the Community Action Program for Children (CAP-C) with ongoing funding through Health Canada. In addition to CAP-C sites, there are a variety of other centres funded through alternative sources (i.e., Human Resources Development Canada, Province of Nova Scotia), which have developed throughout the last decade. In total, there are 23 family resource centres in Nova Scotia.

Why is parenting and family support important?

Extensive research, including the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth in Canada, have shown the determinants of healthy child development include:

- Family income
- Level of parental education
- Parenting style
- Neighbourhood safety and cohesion
- Access to quality child-care arrangements

What does the research tell us?

We know parenting matters. Parenting style has a stronger influence than income.[5] It has the most influence on a child's behaviour, even more than several other factors combined. And parenting style strongly influences language and cognitive development, which are key to a child's success in school. Children of parents who are disengaged, authoritarian, or inconsistent in their style, show poorer outcomes in their well-being across all income levels.

Parent-education programs produce the following effects:

- Reduced parental stress and improved coping skills
- Reduced feelings of isolation and increased levels of social support
- Improved awareness of and ability to access community supports
- Decreased family conflict and improved parent-child relationships
- Fewer behavioural problems in children and increased levels of knowledge about healthy child development
- Self-esteem and self-confidence
- Reduced likelihood that families with young children will require longer, more-intrusive services in the future

Programs that build on parents' strengths are long-term, delivered by well-trained facilitators, and form an integral component of a broader set of strategies that focus on early childhood development.

The development of community-based, family resource centres is the foundation for the delivery of quality parent-education programming. However, every agency is challenged by their capacity to reach all those in need.

Family resource centres serving large geographical and/or densely populated areas may face challenges in meeting the needs of their communities. Accessibility in rural areas is a factor that will be considered in the planning and development of this program.

How do we enhance our service and strengthen our delivery of parent education?

The ECD resources will support family resource centres to deliver quality parent-education programs that are compatible with best-practices. This new funding will therefore support the training, delivery, and follow-up of core parent-education programs.

Accountability for these grants will be tied to our Regional Prevention Coordinators for monitoring and data collection.

The second strategy within the parenting- and family-supports priority is the development of the Child Care Resource & Referral program (CCR&R). The purpose of the CCR&R is to enhance the quality and improve accessibility to a range of child-care options for families in Nova Scotia. CCR&Rs provide information for local child-care planning and the provision of new services to meet the unique needs of both rural and urban communities. These services assist parents and caregivers with opportunities for training, access to information, and support on child-related matters.

Child Care Resource & Referral programs exist throughout many parts of Canada and the United States and are considered best practice in early childhood development. The Department of Community Services is working with the sector on finalizing the CCR&R's program guidelines for Nova Scotia. Nine sites have been identified for phase one of CCR&R's development throughout the province. Several of the sites will be established in existing family resource centres. In doing so, family resource centres will become recognized hubs for a variety of parenting and family supports in the province.

The third strategy being implemented under the umbrella of parenting and family support is a provincial Early Language and Learning Program. The Early Language and Learning Program is based on a Canada-wide research project designed to promote the early development of children's language, emergent literacy, and cognitive development.

The implementation strategy for Early Language and Learning is two-fold:

- To provide early language/cognitive awareness and strategies to as many professionals, service providers, and community groups as possible
- To provide fun-filled, interactive programming that emphasizes language skills for children and their parents

The Early Language and Learning program consists of both regional and local service delivery approaches.

A regional partner will acquire the services of a Speech-Language Pathologist (S-LP). A key role of the S-LP will be the provision of training to service providers in the region. Working with the Regional Prevention Coordinator, the S-LP will provide consultation and share innovative practices in delivering parent-child interactive programs.

Working with the regionally based S-LP and Regional Prevention Coordinator, funded projects are responsible to develop and deliver local implementation plans in collaboration with existing child-care centres and family resource centres. Plans can include parent-education programs, child-care programs, and/or parent-child interactive programs.

Ideally, the program mix will include those suited to the full range of children, from birth to age six, including infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers. Programs should involve all the service providers in a family resource centre based program including child-care staff, parent facilitators, parents, and their partners.

Centres can adapt and enhance other parent-child programs but must work with the S-LP to show clear evidence of the integration of best practices in early language promotion and cognitive development.

Sites have been selected to participate in phase one and the four regional speech pathologists are currently being recruited.

The fourth strategy in parenting and family support is the strengthening of Nova Scotia's provincial adoption services. The province will, with the help and advice of specialists and the public sector, enhance domestic adoption services resulting in an increase in the number of children who are adopted. The strengthening of domestic adoption services will create an integrated system of adoption, ensure a standardized approach to service delivery across the province, and enhance accountability for outcomes. Phase One will be a planning phase to include researching best practices in other jurisdictions in Canada and elsewhere, and establishing a vision, principles, business case, human-resource plan and implementation strategy. The process includes stakeholder consultations.

Parenting and Family Supports

Parent Education	Grants for enhanced parent education in family resource centres. Development of parent-education policy guidelines underway.
Child-care Resource & Referral	Nine sites identified and program guidelines under development. Phase One resource materials purchased.
Early Language & Learning	Sites selected, recruitment of speech pathologists underway, model developed, provincial steering committee in place.
Enhanced Domestic Adoption	Project description and project-management team being established for planning phase.

Community Engagement and Infrastructure Support

Community Engagement and Infrastructure Support Objectives

- To promote the development of healthy children.
- To engage communities in planning and to promote the collaboration and integration of existing and new early childhood development services at the local level.
- To promote evidence-based decision-making through the development of accurate, timely information.
- To engage communities in ownership and investment in Early Childhood Development.
- To report on ECD to ensure accountability.

Community-based agencies are already providing quality services for children and families. However, as we invest in new and expanded services, additional support may be required. Regional Collaboration Teams will be established to engage stakeholders in creating service linkages. Investment in information systems will be required to monitor and report information on children's services.

ECD Regional Collaboration Teams

The work of the Regional Collaboration Teams will be critical in the development of a system of early childhood development at the regional/local level. The teams will play an essential role in creating both formal and informal linkages between existing ECD programs and services and new and expanded ECD programs and services. The Regional Collaboration Teams, one in each region, will include representation from community-based agencies and can include parents, caregivers, other consumers, representatives from the departments of Health, Community Services and Education, and other interested partners. They will link to the regional Children and Youth Action Committees (CAYAC).

Overall, the ECD Regional Collaboration Teams will guide the development of the system. The system will not be defined as a single entity, but the Team must create a plan that moves services towards more collaboration and long-term growth. We recognize and encourage the notion that services must come together to fully support children. The following are some of the key tasks required of the Regional Collaboration Teams in the early phases:

- Develop a plan of action that outlines their implementation strategy for the ECD system, including linkages with existing services.
- Review and update the region's environmental scan on services for young children. Identify needs and trends within their regions.
- Facilitate a long-range planning process with a view to building "regional coalitions" for Early Childhood Development services. Regional coalitions may be developed on a particular ECD strategy (i.e., CCR&Rs or Early Language and Learning program) towards implementing these programs at a local level. This will be a three-to-five-year planning process. The planning process can vary within each region.

- Provide support for and advice on the new ECD programs in their regions.
- Facilitate and engage all stakeholders in identifying the service mix that will work best in their regions. This will include child-care programs, parent education and family support, and services for children with special needs. Regional Collaboration Teams will be responsible for providing a clear rationale for priority setting.
- Over time, the collaboration team should monitor the coordination of services and frequency of referrals from one service to another. The team should also identify gaps in services and create an accessible, easily identifiable set of services for children and their parents. Protocols will be developed for information-sharing and networking. The ideal system would be transparent to parents and will enable them to seamlessly access services as their families' needs change.

To facilitate monitoring of progress, evaluation, and public-reporting, Nova Scotia needs to allocate resources to develop an early childhood information system. A four-phased information plan exists to move Early Childhood Services from a manual, paper system to a computerized information system. Phase One and Two were completed in the last six months with a focus on child-care subsidy applications and child-care subsidy payments on a system. Use of grant funds will also become computerized to track accountability for ECD resources and enable annual public reporting. The next step in the development of the information system will be to computerize the licensing function in the Fall 2003.

Community Engagement and Infrastructure

Regional Collaboration Teams	Plan for a comprehensive system of Early Childhood Development complete and Regional Collaboration Teams established.
Information System and Reporting	Completion of plan for information-technology requirements and implementation of Phases One and Two. Development of ECD Work Plan and Baseline Report and this Annual Report.

Summary of Grant Investments

Implementation of Nova Scotia's Early Childhood Development Initiative is truly a reflection of the joint provincial and federal commitment to children, as new federal funds build upon existing provincially funded services. Our joint efforts will ensure the best possible future for our children.

Provincial Childhood & FPT ECD Grant Expenditure Summary 2002–2003

Program	Provincial Funding	ECD Funding	Total Allocation (Actual)
Promoting Healthy Pregnancy, Birth, and Infancy			
Healthy Beginnings – Enhanced Home Visiting Initiative	DOH funding of home visiting unknown due to multifaceted role of public health staff	3,582,660	3,582,660
Sub-Total		**3,582,660**	**3,582,660**
Stabilizing & Enhancing Childcare			
Stabilization Grant	ECD Initiative only	3,629,196	3,629,196
Training Initiative	ECD Initiative only	1,306,400	1,306,400
New & Expanded Childcare	ECD Initiative only	1,620,000	1,620,000
Inclusion/Differential	1,127,100	1,153,100	2,280,200
Subsidy & Equipment Grants	9,403,300	307,000	9,710,300
Other Childcare	2,740,800	0	2,740,800
Child Development Centres	293,000	400,000	693,000
Early Intervention	1,897,500	0	1,897,500
ECDS Administration	386,700	0	386,700
ESIA Childcare	2,606,000	2,300,000	4,906,000
Sub-Total	**18,454,400**	**10,715,696**	**29,170,096**
Strengthening Parenting & Family Support			
Family Resource & Parent Education	876,000	261,721	1,128,721
Child-care Resource & Referrals	ECD Initiative only (several in family resource centres)	450,000	450,000
Early Language & Learning	ECD Initiative only (several in family resource centres)	567,500	567,500
Enhancement of Domestic Adoption	ECD Initiative only	24,400	24,400
Sub-Total	**876,000**	**1,303,621**	**2,170,621**
Community Engagement & Infrastructure Support			
Regional Collaboration Teams	ECD Initiative only	20,000	20,000
Information System Development	ECD Initiative only	400,000	400,000
Administration & Operations	ECD Initiative only	663,223	663,223
Sub-Total		**1,083,223**	**1,083,223**
Total	**$19,321,400**	***$16,685,200**	**$36,096,600**

*Includes carry-forward of unspent FPT ECD funds from 2001–2002
Amounts are gross expenditures. Federal funds received under NCB for Wards projected at $1,300,000 are ncluded.
*For further information on the fiscal year 2001–2002 and the corrected baseline for 2000–2001, see Apperdices.

The first year has lain the foundation for building our system of early childhood development. Home visiting will continue to be enhanced in communities throughout the province. We will continue efforts in stabilizing and enhancing childcare through the recruitment, retention, and training of early childhood development professionals. Under parent education and support, we will expand the number of Child Care Resource and Referral sites and Early Language and Learning programs and proceed with planning the enhancement of adoption services. Stakeholders will be brought together through newly created Regional Collaboration Teams. Information-system development will continue, enhancing our ability to monitor and report on the Early Childhood Development Initiative. We have made great progress with the input of many and will continue down the path towards implementing our vision: *Our Children . . . Today's Investment, Tomorrow's Promise.*

Glossary of Terms

The non-parental care of infant, toddler, preschool, and school-age children in formal and informal settings, providing for their physical, social, emotional and intellectual development.

"Non-profit" refers to a licensed centre that is operated by a voluntary board of directors.

"Commercial" refers to child-care centres that are incorporated as for-profit business operations.

Non-profit, part-day, licensed, child-care services run by a board of directors. These support services are proven to significantly benefit less-advantaged children. Currently, the Department of Community Services funds 26 of these centres (694 licensed spaces) by way of operating grants.

Regionalized, community-based child-care services designed to:

- Coordinate, enhance, and improve the quality and accessibility of a range of child-care options for families
- Develop child-care services that provide local solutions to the unique needs of local communities
- Compile and share information with parents, child-care providers and communities
- Establish child-care provider recruitment, parent referral, and parent and provider training and support in the communities they serve

The goal of early intervention is to help children (from birth to six years of age) with identified special needs reach their potential by working directly with children and families in their homes. The Department of Community Services provides grants to support these programs, develops policies, standards, and procedures, and assists in their local areas.

Financial assistance provided to licensed child-care centres or family child-care agencies on behalf of parents to help to offset child-care fees. The Department of Community Services also provides child-care subsidies to income-assistance clients as an employment-support service.

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Endnotes

[1] National Research Council & Institute of Medicine (2000:5)

[2] Mustard, F. & Norrie McCain, M. (1999).
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[3] Hertzman, Clyde (March 2003).
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[5] Willms, J. Douglas (2002).
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Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press.

Appendices

Provincial Childhood & FTP ECD Grant Expenditure Summary 2001 – 2002			
Program	**Provincial Funding**	**ECD Funding**	**Total Allocation (Actual)**
Promoting Healthy Pregnancy, Birth & Early Years			
Healthy Beginnings – Enhanced Home Visiting Initiative	DOH funding of home visiting unknown due to multifaceted role of public health staff	417,340	417,340
Sub-Total		**417,340**	**417,340**
Stabilizing & Enhancing Childcare			
Inclusion/Differential	1,586,832	278,556	1,865,388
Subsidy & Equipment Grants	9,372,599	146,660	9,519,259
Other Childcare	2,854,720	0	2,854,720
Stabilization Grant	ECD Initiative only	3,448,122	3,448,122
Child Development Centres	286,301	0	286,301
Early Intervention	1,897,742	0	1,897,742
ECDS Administration	565,279	0	565,279
French Translation of ECD Training Materials	ECD Initiative only	15,000	15,000
ESIA Childcare	3,174,649	0	3,174,649
Sub-Total	**19,738,122**	**3,888,338**	**23,626,460**
Strengthening Parenting & Family Support			
Family Resource & Parent Education	1,079,600	0	1,079,600
Community Engagement & Infrastructure Support			
Administration & Operations	ECD Initiative only	109,129	109,129
Sub-Total		**109,129**	**109,129**
Total	**$20,817,722**	***$4,414,807**	**$25,232,529**

*Note: ECD carry-forward of $4,685,200 from 2001 – 2002 to 2002 – 2003
Amounts are gross expenditures. Federal funds received under NCB for Wards of $1,235,898 are included.

ECD Provincial Expenditures in Nova Scotia

Program	Provincial Funding (Actual)
Childcare Subsidies & Equipment Grants	9,094,622
Special Needs Differential	1,308,276
Non Profit Program Funding	
Other Childcare	2,871,569
Child Development Centres	285,216
Early Intervention	1,612,125
ECDS Administration	581,368
Employment Support & Income Assistance	
Childcare	899,591
Child Care Resource Funding	
Family Resource Centres	515,500
Total Provincial Early Childhood Expenditure	**$17,168,267**

Prepared by Department of Community Services Finance Division
Note: Base Line Report (Error on page 19 – Base Provincial Expenditure)

Amounts are gross expenditures. Federal funds received under NCB for Wards of $939,867 are included.

NOVA SCOTIA